

President's Message

Hank Lohse

As you probably know by now, we are in the middle of the Corona Virus pandemic. The results are devastating not only for human life but also for our economy. Because most of our members are in the target age group, It is important for all of us to practice social distancing and proper hygiene.

In order to comply with the state and local directives, both the Rocklin History Museum and Old St. Mary's Chapel will be closed until further notice. The RHS Monthly Board meeting on April 13th has also been cancelled. Heritage Trail Days has been cancelled for 2020. For more information about Placer county Public Health Directives and COVID-19 please visit www.placer.CA.gov/coronavirus.

Continuing on a somber note, I am sad to inform you that RHS has lost two warriors who were always there for the society through the years. Leah Young and Laura Woods will be greatly missed. Please read the enclosed obituaries for these special ladies.

On a happy note, I would like to announce two new members to the RHS Board, Linda Wampler and Charlene Rhodes. Linda is the new publisher for the Quarry Quarterly. Charlene is working on updating our standing rules and by-laws.

Stay at home and stay safe!



Quarry Quarterly

Our History Our Heritage Our Community

ROCKLIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

April, 2020

Skip Gebel: Man of character, compassion

By Gloria Beverage

If one quality could be used to describe Skip Gebel, it would be compassion.

The Rocklin resident, who died Jan. 6, loved history, nature and people – not necessarily in that order. A devoted family man, he also had a silly sense of humor and a strong sense of responsibility to his community.

Born Chris Eugene Gebel in Canton, Ohio on Nov. 28, 1946, Skip (as he was dubbed by his grandfather) was the child of a U.S. Navy Petty Officer, which meant a childhood traveling throughout the U.S. and the Pacific. Since he was born on Thanksgiving, his mother liked to remind him that he was her turkey that year.

Skip earned the rank of Eagle Scout and, as one family member commented during the Celebration of Life ceremony, "he lived all the traits taught by the Boy Scouts, except he wasn't very thrifty."

He enlisted in the Navy when he was 17, spent a year at the College of Eastern Utah and began his military career at age 18. Skip studied at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey and became fluent in Turkish and Mandarin Chinese.

By the time he left the Navy in 1976 to begin a career in information technology, Skip had attained the rank of Petty Officer First Class.

Although his job with the phone company meant dealing with some tough customers – Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Health and Welfare – one family member



Just days before his diagnosis, Skip and Carol attended a quilt show in Grass Valley.

believed Skip gave 100 percent to the job while letting his staff know he was there to help them do their jobs better.

Two years later, Skip moved to a computer maintenance company where he met Carol Williams Krieg, who worked in a different department. They dated secretly – surprising their co-workers when they announced their engagement at the company Christmas party.

Skip never tired of exploring new places. During his lifetime, he either visited or lived in 47 states; his military service included assignments in the Philippines, Spain, Bermuda, Italy and Greece.

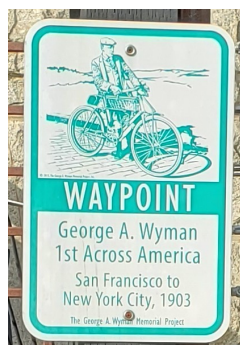
The couple's shared love of history and traveling resulted in trips to visit Civil War history sites while they were living on the East Coast. When they moved to Northern California, their focus turned to the history of the

(See SKIP, page 2)



MYSTERY
PLACE

Do you know where this issue's Mystery Place is? See the story on page 4.



(SKIP, Cont. from page 1)

Gold Rush.

After settling in Rocklin in 1996, Skip indulged his passion for history by joining the Rocklin Historical Society. During his term as president, Skip launched the fundraising drive to build a firehouse replica on Front Street. He continued to push the project forward after his term in office ended.

"Skip made numerous contributions to the building of the firehouse and the chapel," noted Gene Johnson. In fact, Skip often volunteered during open houses at the chapel and sometimes helped out preparing the chapel for weddings, recalled Nancy Lohse.

Skip would often sit with me during open houses at the chapel. He'd try to teach me to play cribbage. It didn't work," she laughed. "One time I watched him carefully iron the runner we used for the center aisle (during weddings)."

Ever the jokester, Skip once offered a bit of advice to one prospective groom, Lohse continued. He told him to remember three things if he wanted a successful marriage: "She's always right. She's always right. She's always right."

He was the first to show up and help family members, including helping with caregiving duties for his father-in-law and mother-in-law.

Skip nurtured Carol's desire to learn how to quilt and supported her interest in collecting quilts. When she began planning for a public display of her collection, Skip designed and built

several display racks to use at the show.

"Skip was very interested in nature, including birds," recalled his wife of 41 years. "His favorite birds were predators – eagles and hawks. Yet, he liked smaller birds, particularly cardinals."

One time while living in Concord, the couple decided to take a drive up the coast.

"We were looking at the elk herd as we drove out to Tomales Bay," she said. "Skip noticed a mourning dove on the road. He stopped the car, got out and picked up the bird."

As he checked it over, Skip found the bird was suffering from what he suspected was a small injury to its wing.

"We wanted to take it someplace where it could be cared for and rehabilitated so it could be released back into the wild," she continued. "Only knowing one place where this was possible, Skip turned the car around as I sheltered the bird in a towel on my lap."

They took the bird to the Alexander Lindsay Natural History Museum (now the Lindsay Wildlife Experience) in Walnut Creek where they knew wildlife veterinarians would nurse it back to health.

That outing remains one of Carol's favorite memories of her life partner.

One of the couple's last adventures was a trip to New Hampshire to attend a quilt history seminar, a topic they both loved. Skip had



Courtesy Carol Gebel

For more than 20 years, Skip would join his daughter, Nicole, for annual Christmas shopping adventures.

been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and vascular dementia just prior to the trip, Carol explained. Medication gave them a few months of almost, but not quite normal days, before the downward spiral began.

Skip is also survived by two daughters, two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Memorial contributions can be made to the [Alzheimer's Association](#).



Do you know what this issue's Mystery Item is? Hint: You might take it to a dance! See the answer in the next issue of the Quarry Quarterly.



Did you know? **Johnson-Springview Park** *has:*

Basketball Court	Mineral spring
Covered Picnic Area	Barbecues
Field (open turf)	Picnic Tables
Playground	Restrooms
Roller Hockey Rink	Benches
Sand Volleyball	Skate Park
Tennis Courts	Walking Paths
Off leash Dog Park	Free Wi-Fi
Indian Grinding Rocks	
A designated Salmon habitat creek	
Baseball/Softball/Soccer areas	

See more on page 6

RANDY PETERS
CATERING & EVENTS
PLAN. PARTY. REPEAT.



It appears that Old St. Mary's is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
Photo by Dr. Jim Carlson

Old St. Mary's Chapel's Bell is Silent for Now

By Nancy Lohse

Old St. Mary's Chapel has seen her share of stressful times. Between World Wars and numerous pandemics, the chapel has always been there for the people of Rocklin since 1883. With the latest pandemic, we have had weddings canceled or rescheduled. It's a difficult time for couples that have been looking forward to their weddings for months but they do realize that the chapel will be waiting for them when things return to normal. New couples are still being booked thanks to emails and phones.

We will remain closed until the social distancing directive is lifted not only for the safety of our couples but also for the safety of our volunteers. We have to keep those Church Ladies safe!

Come visit the chapel when this is all over. She's missing visitors!!

Please Note: It is unclear, at press time, whether this year's Homecoming Reunion will take place as scheduled, or if it will be postponed or cancelled. Watch for an update!



ANNOUNCING THE ANNUAL

Rocklin Homecoming Reunion & Celebration

Sunday following Memorial Day - that's May 31st!

You know you grew up in Rocklin
(or you've lived here more than a "few" years)
if you remember ...

- The skating rink ...
- Swimming in the quarry ...
- Deer Creek Lumber ...
- The Flying Saucer ...
- Chuck Lucas ...

***What's your story?
Bring pictures & mementos, bring a friend,
everyone's invited!***

Springview Hall - 5th Street Community Center
Sunday - May 31, 2020 - 11:00 'til 2:00 p.m.
Luncheon Buffet - Minimum \$20.00 donation requested

Save a seat by calling or emailing Gay Morgan before May 22nd, please!
gfmorgan@att.net or 916-624-2355

Sponsored by Rocklin Historical Society and
Randy Peters Catering & Events

What's Growing?

By Sally Huseby

As Spring showers usher in one of the prettiest seasons of the year, residents and visitors can drive through the numerous neighborhood parks throughout our city as well as the gardens at our historical Rocklin Museum and St. Mary's Chapel, the oldest building in town where professional gardeners take meticulous care of the flowerbeds year round.

As we work through these trying times helping family and friends, a walk through the gardens can give a lift to our spirits.



LAURA WILLARD WOODS 1931-2020

By Gay Morgan

Laura Willard Woods, the youngest daughter of Alfred and Rose Willard, was born in Rocklin, California on February 12, 1931. She attended school in Rocklin and Nevada City and graduated from Roseville High School in 1948 and then went to Placer Junior College in Auburn.

While working at the Placer County Library, she met her husband John W. "Bill" Woods. They are the parents of three adult sons, Bruce (Becky), Brad (Marty)

and Bill.

The Woods moved more than 20 times during their marriage but during their time in Rocklin they were avid supporters of the Rocklin Historical Society and it's efforts to create a History Museum and later to move and restore the oldest building in Rocklin, St. Mary's Church built in 1883.

Laura and Bill actively participated in yard sales, fund raisers and social events. They ran the Museum gift shop and Laura was in charge of the Christmas Boutique and of course they were very knowledgeable docents. (You might have guessed by now they were inseparable for 69 years.)

They moved, for the last time, to Martinez, CA, to live with their eldest son. It was there that Laura



passed away peacefully on her 89th birthday.

At her request no funeral was held. The family plans to have a Celebration of Life at a later date.

Motorcycle's first Transcontinental voyage is Quarterly's Mystery Place

In 1903, a young man named George Wyman set off from his home in San Francisco on an epic adventure, becoming the first person to cross the continental United States on a "motorized bicycle."

From all accounts, Wyman's trek was as much of a push, walk, carry, and drag as it was a "ride," given the fact that his California-brand 200 cc 1.25 horsepower motor bicycle seemed to challenge him at every turn.



According to the George A. Wyman Historical Project website, "This historic transcontinental motorcycle journey took place at the beginning of the 20th century when life moved at the pace of the horse and buggy. The "motorcycle" was regarded as a novelty, used by young me to cruise the neighborhood and ride around town. It was a time of innovations in

personal transportation, but it would be the automobile that would capture the imagination of the public and change America."

With a camera and a diary, Wyman set off on his 50 day trek, leaving San Francisco on May 25, 1903, and arriving in New York City on July 6. Below is an excerpt of his diary describing his trip from the Sacramento Valley to Truckee.

A few miles from Sacramento is the land of sheep.



Look closely at the Barudoni building and you will see the plaque dedicated to George A. Wyman, the first person to cross the United States by motorcycle.

The country for miles around is a country of splendid sheep ranches, and the woolly animals and the sombreroed ranchmen are everywhere. Speeding around a bend in the road I came almost precipitately upon an immense drove which was being driven to Nevada. While the herders swore, the sheep scurried in every direction, fairly piling on top of each other in their eagerness to get out of my path. The timid, bleating creatures even wedged solidly in places. As they were headed in the same direction I was going, it took some time to worry through the drove.

The pastoral aspect of the sheep country gradually gave way to a more rugged landscape, huge boulders dotting the earth and suggesting the approach to the

(See WYMAN page 9)

LEAH ALEXSON YOUNG

11-21-32 to 3-12-20

By Gay Morgan

Leah passed away peacefully in her home in Roseville from pancreatic cancer.

She was born in Auburn, California to parents Ina and Hjalmer Alexson.

She spent her early years in Rocklin and attended Rocklin Grammar School. When her family moved to Roseville she attended Roseville Schools and graduated from Roseville Joint Union High School in 1950. She was a past honored queen of Bethel No.39 International Order of Job's Daughters and a member of the Silver Key Honor Society.

She graduated from Sacramento State College in 1958. She taught in Sacramento Elementary Schools until she married Nason Hall and moved to Los Angeles and subsequently to Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio where they raised their two children, Brad and Jennifer.

She returned to Roseville in 1982, earned her Special Education Credential and worked for the San Juan School District. During this period she married Shafter "Bill" Young (now deceased).

Survivors include her sister Maxine Chatelaine. Daughter Jennifer Mraz, grandchildren Ethan and Emma Mraz, son-in-law Richard Mraz nephews Craig (Patricia) Chatelaine and Brian (Linda) Chatelaine and companion Robert "Bob" Eich.

A Celebration of Life will be scheduled at a later date. Donations in Leah's name may be made to The Rocklin Historical Society. P.O. Box 1. Rocklin, CA, 95677.



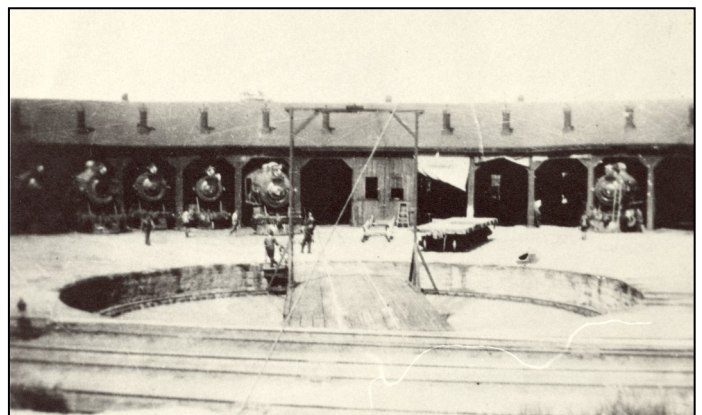
Leah, right, poses with nephew Brian Chatelaine and his wife Linda as they present her father's accordion to the Rocklin Historical Society. Leah's parents, Hjalmer and Ina, would play at the family dances held at Finn Hall. With Hjalmer on the accordion and Ina on the piano, they would play the traditional Schottisch and popular tunes of the day. "I remember those dances," recalls Gay Morgan. The entire family would come. They spread a bale of hay around on the floor for easy dancing. About halfway through, everyone would stop and eat dinner, then continue dancing through the evening."

Roundhouse Roundup

Last summer, during Hot Chili and Cool Cars, the Rocklin Historical Society hosted tours of the roundhouse site (see the [Quarry Quarterly, Fall 2019](#)). This is the site of the planned Southern Pacific Railroad History Center. As the wheels of this project started turning, an informational barbeque was scheduled in preparation for rolling out the project to the community at large. The April 18th date was scuttled, with plans to reschedule in the fall. However, the center continues to move forward. Here is an update from president Scott Inman:

"The Southern Pacific Railroad History Center and Union Pacific Railroad have agreed to lease the vacant "good title" parcel near the Rocklin Roundhouse in preparation of future plans to purchase the property outright. They are currently working out necessary insurance provisions for the occupancy of the property.

In the near future, the organization will move their historic railcar known as SP-10, or "The Budd Car" to



the leased site, and begin recruiting local volunteers to help with restoration efforts. Volunteer skills the organization would like to seek include; project management, fundraising, cleaning, painting/surface preparation, metal fabrication, and machining."

To learn more about the center, visit their [website](#) and view the center's [master plan](#).

Johnson-Springview Park reflects city's heritage



By Gloria Beverage

In the heart of Rocklin's historic district is more than 90 acres of open space featuring numerous heritage oak trees and Antelope Creek as well as several Indian grinding rocks.

The land, known as Johnson-Springview Park, was owned by two pioneer families for more than 100 years. With the sale of acreage off Fifth and Farion Streets to the city for the development of a park, these families were able to give future generations a hint of what appealed to Rocklin's first residents.

Gene and Marg Johnson, one of the original owners of the land, have spent more than 20 years working to preserve Rocklin's history. The backbone of the Rocklin Historical Society, they were the force behind restoration of Old St. Mary's Chapel and the building of the Rocklin Fire House



replica. They were also instrumental in turning a house at the corner of San Francisco Street and Rocklin Road into a museum celebrating Rocklin's history and bringing to life a dream of Rocklin native Roy Ruhkala.

Now plans are underway to celebrate the Johnsons' commitment to preserving the city's history with the placement of a plaque at Johnson-Springview Park.

Funds for the plaque were raised through the annual coin drive held by third grade students. As part of the California history curriculum, students have participated in the coin drive since 2004.



Inspired by Historical Society volunteer Nancy Lohse, then a Rocklin Elementary School teacher, third graders began collecting coins in support of fundraising efforts aimed at restoring and preserving Old St. Mary's Chapel on Front Street.

Once the chapel project was finished, fundraising targeted the purchase and installation of a granite fountain on the patio of the chapel. Since then, funds have been used to purchase and place plaques at historic sites throughout the city.

Thanks to the foresight of the Johnsons and the leadership of the city, Johnson-Springview Park has become the center of community activities ranging from family gatherings to sports events and large-



scale festivals, including the annual Kiwanis Community Festival.

The park's amenities now include lighted baseball and softball fields, a soccer field, lighted tennis courts, an 18-hole disc golf course, restrooms, a sand volleyball court, a children's playground, a roller hockey rink, and a skate park.

Rocklin's dog park includes separate sections for small and large dogs as well as special needs dogs. For more information, visit www.ruffdogpark.org.

Johnson-Springview Park is also home to the Rocklin Community Center and the Rocklin Recreation, Arts, and Event Tourism Department.



*Alice Wickman, sampling the waters at Huff's Mineral Springs, now Johnson-Springfield Park.
(Photo c. 1920, Rocklin Historical Society)*



Who was able to identify our mystery item? If you have been to the Marshall's office at the firehouse lately, you may have seen the new installation.



Stove Door

A caboose stove was recently purchased by the museum and installed in the Marshall's office. Fixit crew members David Baker, Gene Johnson, Jim Hammes, and Doug Osella, along with his friend Victor Carter installed the Southern Pacific made stove.

Bob Church owns Southern Pacific steel cupola caboose No. 1063, that he got in 1984. He has done a lot of restoration work on it, including placing a coal stove like ours.

"Yep," he says, "that is the classic 'SP' caboose heating stove. It was used to cook and keep a pot of hot coffee always ready for use. The good old kind where a handful of grounds was thrown in to a large metal pouring pot!"

The SP cast their own stoves with SP cast onto the door. The SP built many of their cabooses at the Los Angeles Shops besides at the Sacramento Shops. They also installed the "Estate" manufactured caboose stove, which were almost identical to the SP stoves. Next to the stove was a big coal storage box used to fire the stove. Many bay-window modern cabooses had propane gas stoves, but early bay-windows had the coal stove, and older wood and steel cupola cabooses most often kept the old coal

By Jim Hammes

The Team was active during the past quarter up to the time we made the decision to cancel our current and planned activities for now until a time when we all feel safe about regrouping and moving forward.

We have done a good job with staying on task, in general with our "to-do" planner list up to the point of ceasing our weekly meetings and work days.

One item of note that has had significant progress was working under the direction of David Baker and Identifying, Tagging, Photographing and Cataloging the Historical artifacts at the City Corp Yard. There has been some sense of urgency to be sure that we protect the items by adding them to a data base that David and the Museum Team will manage. We still have a bit more to do to complete the project but feel good for the progress made to date.

We would like to say a very Special



Fixit Team Nuts and Bolts

Thank You to Traci Hammes Real Estate for her Generous and Supportive donation to our Roundhouse BBQ event that was scheduled for Saturday, April 18th but was postponed for now, due to the current Health crisis we are all facing. We look forward to the event and everyone having a chance to meet Traci once we set a new date.

Finally, we all hope and pray that we will all be together again soon and enjoying each others company and support, especially in such a new and challenging time – that of which none of us can say we have experienced in past times.

The current work to overcome this health crisis and task is one even our determined Fix It – Planning Team is unable to schedule.

stove all their service life.

The cupola is the raised box with seats on the top of the caboose, so crew men could look ahead and make certain the train was safely moving.

Our stove isn't in a caboose, but it certainly adds to the historic ambience of

the Marshall's office.

Cabooses are not in use much anymore. They were phased out in the late 1980s. For a more complete history of the caboose, and why they are gone, be sure to see the article in the next issue of the Quarry Quarterly.



A safety necessity for nearly 150 years, cabooses have been phased out since the 1980s.

rip rap by gay morgan

THEY DON'T MAKE 'EM LIKE THAT...

The year was 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president, the Korean War ended, Jonas Salk invented a vaccine for polio. It was the year that Ernest Willard, the first police chief in Rocklin, bought this beautiful Chevrolet Bel Air four door sedan.

This car has served many purposes and has been a part of the Willard-Aitken family for 67 years. When the family purchased a new car, Ernest converted the Bel Air to a hunting car, replacing the rear seat with a wooden platform for the hunting dogs.

Later Ernest gave the car to his grandson, Robert Aitken. The car had no transmission and Bob kept it in a barn in Lincoln for 25 years.

When Bob decided to restore it, he said most of the work was done by his wife's brother-in-law, Rick Fuentes, (Original Hot Rods, Lincoln, CA) Bob removed the original paint and wrote many checks over the next three years. They converted the electrical system from 6 V to 12 V and a new transmission and rear end was installed. The car was completely re-upholstered by a man named Paco, of Paco's Upholstery in Rocklin.



NOW WHAT?

We were looking forward to the arrival of Spring. There were a couple of very special birthday celebrations to attend. Finances looked good and some home improvement projects were scheduled. We grumbled about the increasing traffic in the area, recalling that it used to take 10 minutes to drive to Roseville. Now it takes at least 20 and maybe more and you can't find a parking place.

But suddenly the world changed in just a few days. I've been around Rocklin for a long time and I often write about local events in history. This is history and it is happening now.

Most people were getting tired of election news all the time. But then we began to hear of a viral epidem-

ic in China. We felt sympathy for them but felt it had nothing to do with us. Then we heard it was extremely contagious and people were dying of it. Soon we learned that Italy (the whole country) was in quarantine—that couldn't happen to us could it? Well you know it could and it did.

We are sheltering in place. Schools and all non-essential businesses are closed. Some people are working from home but many are not working. We must practice social distancing when we go out. Gatherings of more than 10 individuals are not allowed. Instead of constant election news, it is Covid19 all the time. Evidently nothing else is happening. There is no traffic to complain about. Parking lots are eerily empty, making me think of the old TV show "The Twilight Zone."

I don't know how it will end. I think it will return to something resembling normalcy but It seems we all have changed too. We have learned a lot about human nature. There were those who rose to the occasion and those who took advantage of it.

Some people ran errand and shopped and cooked for elderly neighbors who were most at risk. Friendly phone calls and emails were welcome.

And of course there were those who thought it was their duty to empty grocer's shelves of things like hand sanitizer and toilet paper. (I missed the announcement that toilet paper is a cure.)

One day it will be a memory, hopefully soon. In the meantime stay safe and be well.

From
the desk
of...
Gene Johnson

Rocklin surprise: City or Town who would've thought? We have assumed Rocklin was incorporated as a City in 1893. But a recent Placer Herald article: "News 75 years Ago" notes that the change of Rocklin from a Town to a City occurred in 1944. Unlike some other states, California's Government Code states the terms "city" and "town" are explicitly interchangeable. The change apparently had little impact other than sign and status changes. But, now (2020) more sign changes will be needed to be historically correct e.g. signage of our 1894 Firehouse replica: "City Hall" to "Town Hall", and "City Marshal" to "Town Marshal".

Around Rocklin Roundhouse: Otto and I walked the area that RHS and other volunteers cleaned last summer. One property has a new fence, another has planted a vegetable garden complete with a sitting rock. In general, the property looks presentable save some eucalyptus limbs that have fallen and evidence of one or more transient occupants – likely a person(s) displaced by the recent removal of the transient/homeless camps at Secret Ravine.

I am thinking that additional cleanup of the eucalyptus grove such

as removal of the large rocks and rip-rap would make the area more attractive to citizens and less attractive to transients.

Museum Burglar: Got a call from the Sonitrol security folks that improper entry had been made and there is movement in the museum office: "Shall we call the police?" Usually this is not a serious problem, I said "No don't call the police" and agreed to check the museum. I entered the museum – no burgling in process but the office was disarranged and where the printer would be - there was none. For the moment I had a chill and thought "oh my gosh", then saw a comforting note where printer had been, stating that a member had borrowed it for RHS work at home. All is well.

Press-Tribune, 1/17/1945

(WYMAN, Cont. from page 4)

Sierras. At Rocklin the lower foothills are encountered; the stone beneath the surface of the ground makes a firm roadbed and affords stretches of excellent goings. Beyond the foothills the country is rough and steep and stony and redolent of the days of '49. It was here and hereabouts that the gold finds were made and where the rush and "gold fever" were fiercest. Desolation now rules, and only heaps of gravel, water ditches, and abandoned shafts remain to give color to the marvelous narratives of the "oldest inhabitants" that remain."

After spending the night in Colfax,

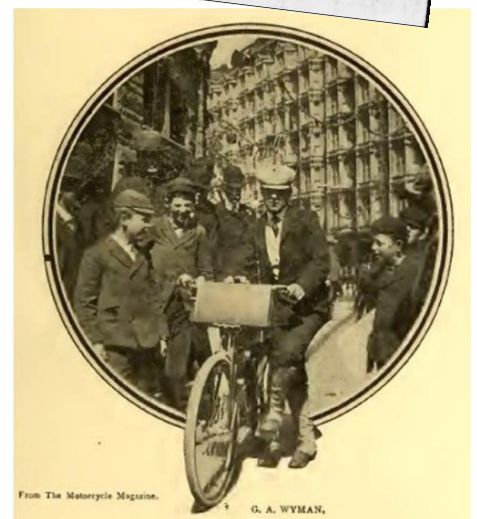
Wyman set off to tackle the Sierra, which were still covered in snow. He made his way by using the snowsheds.

"To ride a motor bicycle through the sheds is impossible. I walked, of course, dragging my machine over the ties for 18 miles by cyclometer measurement. I was 7 hours in the sheds. It was 15 feet under the snow."

Wyman's record is just one more page in Rocklin's varied and interesting past. To read more about this adventure, visit the [George A Wyman Memorial Project](#) website.



Town of Rocklin Becomes City
In future when you say the "Town of Rocklin," you will be in error. The little community just "up the road" a ways from Roseville is to be known henceforth as the City of Rocklin.
Although incorporated for many years, Rocklin has always been referred to as the Town of Rocklin. Last week 25 per cent of the community's qualified voters petitioned the city councilmen to change the name from "town" to "city", and a resolution now on file in the county courthouse did the trick.



Arriving in New York City

A moment in HERstory

Interesting tales of women throughout Rocklin's history

Jennie Minkkinen, Rocklin's first librarian

By Doug Osella

The Placer Herald in its 2002 special 150th year issue made this statement concerning the development of Placer County's library system: *Placer County approved a free library system in May of 1936. By 1938 there were branch libraries in Newcastle, Dutch Flat, Tahoe City, Penryn, Applegate, Gold Hill and Thermalands. Kings Beach was added in 1941 and Rocklin in 1943.*

Jennie Minkkinen opened that first library in 1943 in the old granite City Hall on Granite Street (now Rocklin Road) with an initial collection of 38 books according to a 1968 Placer Herald article. After the first year the shelves held 774 books. She moved the library to its second location in 1965, which was

across the street in the building which had previously housed the Finnish Lutheran Church. The library was open five afternoons a week from 1 to 5 p.m., and Monday and Wednesday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m.

Jennie retired in 1972 having served 29 years as librarian.

A Rocklinite Through and Through

Jennie Josephine Wickman was born in Rocklin in 1904 on High Street. She was the second daughter of Victor and Otilia Wickman, both immigrants from Finland. Her father supported the family by working in the quarries, and later he owned his own quarry. Of the five Wickman daughters, Jennie was the most outgoing. On her



Jennie Minkkinen



Rocklin's second library. Note the fundraising "thermometer" for the "new" or third library, which now houses the Rocklin Parks and Recreation Department.

100th birthday her daughter Norine Files told a reporter, "Jennie was a social person. She was very popular; the town was so small so everyone knew her."

One of her earliest jobs was at Pekuri's general merchandise store, which was located on Granite Street near the railroad tracks where the future firehouse and later Rocklin Body Shop would be located. The store was on stilts so there was a basement. Hilda Pekuri was her aunt.

The Spanish ladies liked Jennie to wait on them because she could understand Spanish somewhat. She didn't speak Spanish, but she could usually interpret what they were saying, a skill developed from

(See Minkkinen, page 11)

(*Minkkinen, Cont. from page 11*)

learning the Finnish language, which was spoken at home.

She told about an incident in the store when a customer, a Spanish lady, asked for “axe”. She repeated her request that sounded like “axe”. She wanted axe. So, Jennie went down stairs and fetched an axe. A good laugh fol-



The popular marcel wave

lowed because the lady was asking for “eggs”.

Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s, she got a license from the State and operated a hair-dressing business in her home. She possessed the irons and the talent to create those marvelous “marcelled” curls so popular at the time. One can imagine the conversations and friendships formed in that beauty parlor.

In 1927 she married Arvo Minkkinen. She and Arvo, who worked for the Pacific Fruit Express, beautified their yard with roses and sweet peas. He played baseball for the Rocklin Owls. Jennie was the first Wickman daughter to marry, and the only one to marry a man of Finnish descent.

Most notably, the Minkkinens were a civic-minded couple. Arvo served on the Rocklin City Council for 24 years and was mayor for eight years. He was a member of the volunteer fire department. Jennie served on the election board for many years, supervising

elections in Rocklin. She served on the Placer County Grand Jury. She was president and active member of the Mother’s Club when her daughters, Norine and Barbara, were students at Rocklin Grammar School.

To aid in the defense of her country during WWII, she volunteered as a civilian plane spotter for the U.S.



Army’s Aircraft Warning Service. She and a friend would don arm bands and ride their bikes out to an observation post on a hill near Barton Road. There they scanned the skies for Japanese war planes.

Jennie Minkkinen never uprooted from High Street. She lived her 100 years in only three houses, all on High Street in Rocklin. From this well-rooted base she served her community and especially the reading public well.

What was the Aircraft Warning Service?

During WWII, the east and west coasts of the United States were protected by civilian volunteer aircraft spotters.

Almost one million men and women—volunteer “soldiers out of uniform”—served in the AWS.

Some were ground observers scanning the skies for enemy aircraft; others worked in the information and filter centers as part of the Aircraft Warning Corps, the second component of the AWS.

Since it wasn’t practical to use military personnel as ground observers, the logical solution was to call on civilians to watch the skies. Newspaper ads and radio programs were used to recruit the tens of thousands of volunteers needed to join the Ground Observer Corps and man the observation posts.

Over 14,000 observation posts were manned in two-hour shifts

around the clock. Some were only shacks, hen houses, or junked automobiles while others were more elaborate shelters.

Aircraft spotters learned to identify all types of aircraft through intensive training classes and training aids such as aircraft spotter cards, guides, and silhouette models. Buttons and armbands identified ground observers, and special pins and medals were awarded to those with the highest number of volunteer hours.

Members kept up-to-date with *The Aircraft Warning Volunteer* magazine, devoted to the activities and interests of the GOC and AWC, contained news articles, photos, and aircraft recognition tests.

Volunteers kept their skills sharp by testing themselves in the WWII Aircraft Warning Volunteer Magazine





Rocklin Historical Society
Board of Directors

Henry Lohse, President
Allegra Hakim, Secretary
Russ McNeill, Treasurer
Kathie Nippert, Board member
Ronna Davis, Board member
Sally Huseby, Board member
Nancy Lohse, Board member
David Baker, Board member
Patsy Pattison, Board member
George Salgado, Board member
Jim Hammes, Board member
Charlene Rhodes, Board member
Linda Wampler, Board member

Now it is possible to make tax-deductible gifts and perpetual endowments that will support Rocklin Historical Society programs including both visual and performing arts related to Rocklin's heritage. Please contact Veronica Blake at 530-885-4920 to learn how you can contribute, or go to www.placercf.org.

The Rocklin Heritage Fund at the Placer Community Foundation supports the Rocklin Historical Society

Placer
Community
FOUNDATION

Local giving. Lasting value.



NEWS IN ROCKLIN 100 YEARS AGO

Poultry Raising Is Part Of Rocklin School Curriculum

ROCKLIN (Placer Co.), May 22.—A big community fair will be held here next Friday night and will be of particular interest to students of rural education in that it will show the results of teaching in the rural school the subjects closest to the community.

The district including Rocklin and Loomis has grown very fast in importance as a poultry producing center, and amazing results have been obtained by rural school pupils with a dozen hens each in this district.

Makes Big Money With Small Flock.

For instance, 13-year-old Avenor Rukhala has made a little over \$25 in three months with the twelve Rhode Island Red pullets which he is caring for as a part of his school work. His hens averaged 8.5 eggs per day during the last thirty days. He made the big profit because he kept his hens laying heavily during the Winter months when egg prices were high.

To Send Judges to State Fair.

Poultry judging will be one of the features of the community fair at Rocklin next Friday night. All of the youngsters of the Loomis and Rocklin districts who are interested in chickens will be on hand, each with three of his or her best hens, and these hens will be judged by students and by poultry authorities, after which prizes will be awarded.

GRANITE CUTTERS GO ON STRIKE

ROCKLIN, (Special to The Register) March 17.—Fifty granite cutters, members of the granite cutters union went on strike here today when the California Granite Company hired a new cutter following the discharge of ten men the day before.

According to the company the ten men were laid off because of the slow delivery of steel for bank of Italy building in San Francisco, which slowed up delivery of granite.

The men object to the discharge of the ten men in the face of the fact that they are old employees, and then hiring a new man.

Cutters receive \$8 per day for an eight-hour day.

The Quarrymen are not cut and will remain on the job. They settled a strike dispute last October after being out a month, when they received an increase in wages. Before the October strike they were receiving \$4.50 per day, and they receive a raise to \$6 per day.